AP® European History
Sample Student Responses and Scoring Commentary

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- Long Essay Question 2
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Evaluate the most significant effect of the printing press during the period 1450 to 1650.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting Category</th>
<th>Scoring Criteria</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Row A</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>Thesis/Claim</strong>&lt;br&gt;<strong>(0–1 points)</strong></td>
<td><strong>0 points</strong>&lt;br&gt;Does not meet the criteria for one point.&lt;br&gt;<strong>1 point</strong>&lt;br&gt;Responds to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis/claim that establishes a line of reasoning.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Decision Rules and Scoring Notes**

**Responses that do not earn this point:**
- Are not historically defensible.
- Only restate or rephrase the prompt.
- Do not respond to the prompt.
- Do not establish a line of reasoning.
- Are overgeneralized.

**Responses that earn this point:**
- Provide a historically defensible thesis or claim about the most significant effect of the printing press in the period 1450–1650. The thesis or claim must either provide some indication of the reasoning for making that claim OR establish the analytic categories of the argument.

**Examples that do not earn this point:**
- Do not focus on the topic of the prompt
  - “The most significant factor affecting the development of the printing press was the demand for religious texts during the Reformation.”
- Do not provide a historically defensible claim
  - “The most significant effect of the printing press in the period 1450–1650 was to encourage governments to create mass public education systems.”
- Provide a historically defensible claim, but do not establish a line of reasoning
  - “Gutenberg’s development of the printing press was so significant, it even led to an edition of the Bible being named for him.”
- Restate the prompt or are overgeneralized
  - “The printing press had an enormous effect on early modern Europe.”
  - “The printing press allowed ideas to spread faster.”

**Examples that earn this point:**
- Establish a line of reasoning that evaluates the topic of the prompt
  - “The most significant effect of the printing press in the period was the spread of knowledge beyond a narrow intellectual elite, resulting in major religious and social changes.”
- Establish a line of reasoning that evaluates the topic of the prompt with analytic categories
  - “The most significant effect of the printing press was its ability to rapidly spread new religious and scientific ideas, like heliocentrism, to a large part of Europe’s population.”
- Establish a line of reasoning
  - “During the sixteenth century, the most significant impact of the printing press was the spread of Protestant ideas during the Reformation.” (Minimally acceptable thesis/claim)

**Additional Notes:**
- The thesis or claim must consist of one or more sentences located in one place, either in the introduction or the conclusion (which may not be limited to the first or last paragraphs).
- The thesis or claim must identify a relevant development(s) in the period, although it is not required to encompass the entire period.
### Scoring Guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Row B Contextualization (0–1 points)</td>
<td>0 points Does not meet the criteria for one point.</td>
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</table>

#### Decision Rules and Scoring Notes

**Responses that do not earn this point:**
- Provide an overgeneralized statement about the time period referenced in the prompt.
- Provide context that is not relevant to the prompt.
- Provide a passing phrase or reference.

**Examples that do not earn this point:**
- Provide an overly generalized attempt at contextualization
  - “There were numerous reasons why Europeans needed more written material and books in the 1400s.”
  - “Before the printing press, ideas didn’t spread easily.”
- Provide a passing phrase or reference
  - “Gutenberg invented the printing press in the 1400s.”

**Responses that earn this point:**
- Accurately describe a context relevant to the effects of the printing press in the period 1450–1650.

**Examples of relevant context that earn this point include the following, if appropriate elaboration is provided:**
- Increased commercial activity and urbanization
- Medieval church’s effective control of most book production
- Growing interest in classical texts during the Renaissance
- Discontent with the Catholic Church
- Only elites were literate and educated
- Protestant Reformation
- Hand copying of books before the printing press

**Examples of acceptable contextualization:**
- “Prior to the invention of the printing press, most books were produced by members of the Catholic Church, which could largely control the spread of ideas.”
- “At the same time the printing press was being developed, there was mounting criticism against many aspects of the Catholic Church.”

**Additional Notes:**
- The response must relate the topic of the prompt to broader historical events, developments, or processes that occur before, during, or continue after the time frame of the question.
- To earn this point, the context provided must be more than a phrase or reference.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Row C Evidence (0–2 points)</td>
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<tr>
<td>0 points</td>
<td>Does not meet the criteria for one point.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 point</td>
<td>Provides specific examples of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 points</td>
<td>Supports an argument in response to the prompt using specific and relevant examples of evidence.</td>
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</table>

**Decision Rules and Scoring Notes**

Responses that do not earn points:
- Identify a single piece of evidence.
- Provide evidence that is not relevant to the topic of prompt.
- Provide evidence that is outside the time period or region specified in the prompt.
- Repeat information that is specified in the prompt.

Examples that do not earn points:
- Provide evidence that is outside the time period
  - “Cheap printed pamphlets played a major role in undermining the French monarchy and bringing on the French Revolution.”

Responses that earn 1 point:
- Identify at least two specific historical examples relevant to the topic of the effect of the printing press on Europe in the period 1450–1650.
- Examples of evidence that are specific and relevant include the following (two examples required):
  - The Printing of Latin and vernacular versions of the Christian Bible, such as the Gutenberg Bible or Luther’s German Bible
  - The growth of literacy beyond a small group of elites
  - Protestant and Catholic pamphlets
  - Printed law codes and legal documents used by governments
  - Index of Forbidden Books
  - Attempts at censorship/government licensing of printing presses
  - Printing of scientific works, such as Galileo’s treatises or Francis Bacon’s works
  - Printing of explorers’ accounts such as the 1492 Columbus letter

Example of a statement that earns one point for evidence:
- “Authorities tried to control the new technology. Governments tried to license printing presses and the Catholic Church maintained a list of books that could not be published.”

Responses that earn 2 points:
- Use at least two specific historical examples to support an argument regarding the effects of the printing press on Europe in the period 1450–1650.
- Examples that successfully support an argument with evidence:
  - “When people could read cheap printed Bibles and other religious texts for themselves, the authority of the clergy was threatened.” (Functions as part of an argument that print served to undermine existing authorities)
  - “New political and religious ideas spread more rapidly as a result of print. Thomas More’s Utopia criticized existing society. In Praise of Folly by Erasmus attacked the corruption of the Church. Both works gained wide circulation facilitated by the printing press.” (Presents a topic sentence making a general statement about the cultural effects of print followed by two specific examples)
  - “Martin Luther was able to use print, especially cheap printed pamphlets, to spread his ideas to a much wider audience than would have been possible if they all had to be copied by hand.” (Presents a piece of evidence about print and links it to an argument about the importance of print in the Protestant Reformation)

Additional Notes:
- Typically, statements credited as evidence will be more specific than statements credited as contextualization.
- If a response has a multipart argument, then it can meet the threshold of two pieces of evidence by giving one example for one part of the argument and another example for a different part of the argument, but the total number of examples must still be at least two.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Row D Analysis and Reasoning</strong> (0–2 points)</td>
<td><strong>Scoring Criteria</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 points</td>
<td>Does not meet the criteria for one point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 point</td>
<td>Uses historical reasoning (e.g., comparison, causation, continuity and change) to frame or structure an argument that addresses the prompt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 points</td>
<td>Demonstrates a complex understanding of the historical development that is the focus of the prompt, using evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument that addresses the question.</td>
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**Decision Rules and Scoring Notes**

**Responses that do not earn points:**
- May include evidence but offer no reasoning to connect the evidence to an argument.
- May assert the use of historical reasoning but does not use it to frame or structure an argument.

**Examples that do not earn points:**
- Provide evidence but offer no reasoning to connect the evidence to an argument.
  - “Books became cheaper, more people were able to afford them, and more people learned to read.”
  - “Renaissance thinkers published books with new ideas.”

**Responses that earn 1 point:**
- Must demonstrate the use of historical reasoning to frame or structure an argument that addresses the effect of the printing press on Europe in the period 1450–1650, although the reasoning may be uneven, limited, or imbalanced.

**Using a historical thinking skill to frame or structure an argument could include:**
- Using causal reasoning to explain significant cultural, religious, political or intellectual effects of the printing press on Europe in the period 1450–1650.
- Structuring an argument thematically to highlight the different effects of print.
- Arranging an argument to recount developments over the course of the period showing change over time.

**Examples of acceptable use of historical reasoning:**
- “The printing press caused the widespread distribution of Luther’s Theses and his Protestant ideas.” (Uses causal reasoning to explain a significant religious effect of the printing press on Europe in the period 1450–1650. This statement would need to be followed with at least a minimal elaboration of this reasoning.)
- “Another key example of the printing press spreading knowledge is the spread of scientific knowledge and philosophy.” (Uses causal reasoning to explain a significant intellectual effect of the printing press on Europe in the period 1450–1650. This statement would need to be followed up with at least a minimal elaboration of this reasoning.)

**Responses that earn 2 points:**
- May demonstrate a complex understanding in a variety of ways, such as:
  - Explaining the nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables.
  - Explaining both similarity and difference, or explaining both continuity and change, or explaining multiple causes, or explaining both causes and effects.
  - Explaining relevant and insightful connections within and across periods.
  - Confirming the validity of an argument by corroborating multiple perspectives across themes.
  - Qualifying or modifying an argument by considering diverse or alternative views or evidence.

**Demonstrating complex understanding might include any of the following, if appropriate elaboration is provided:**
- Explaining changes in the effects of print over the course of the period. (Provides insightful connections within and across periods)
- Explaining different effects of print in different regions of Europe. (Explains nuance, multiple variables)
- Evaluating whether the religious effects of print were more significant than intellectual changes associated with its spread. (Qualifies or modifies an argument)
- Considering religious and political effects of print. (Confirms the validity of an argument by corroborating multiple perspectives across themes)
<table>
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<th>Additional Notes:</th>
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<td>• This demonstration of complex understanding must be part of the argument, not merely a phrase or reference.</td>
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</table>
Prior to the 16th century, literature was available only to the elite upper class. Monks copied and copied classical texts, as well as medieval literature, thus preserving the Greek and Roman works that would fuel the renaissance. Given the scarcity of the written word, the invention of the Gutenberg printing press truly revolutionized society. The most significant effect of the printing press from 1450 to 1650 is arguably the spread of Protestant religious ideals, which brought both political and religious upheaval.

Before the invention of the printing press, the Bible was almost exclusively limited to the church, which stood as the sole authority of scripture. The church embraced corruption and pluralism. However, the church corrupted church practices, like the selling of indulgences and pluralism to accumulate wealth, caused people to begin questioning their faith in the church. Martin Luther’s 95 Theses, a reaction to the sale of indulgences, hit upon popular discontent. Luther’s view spread throughout Europe, as the printing press printed his works in vernacular languages. As a result of this spread of ideas, people began to follow Luther’s teachings—to make education more widely available so that others could read the Bible, and to preach in vernacular languages. The spread of Luther’s ideals gave rise to other Protestant sects, like Calvinism, Anabaptism, and Presbyterians. Calvinist, Anabaptist, and Presbyterian works also spread with the help of the printing press, sparking the enflaming the Protestant Reformation, which, without the printing press, would have had a significantly lessened impact.

The printing press not only capitalized on religious unrest but also resulted in political change. Inspired by the works of Martin Luther and disgruntled by manorialism, German peasants revolted and demanded
Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

In the greater Eighties on the basis of scripture, the German peasants revolt was one of numerous political uprisings. The Anabaptists, for instance, captured the city of Münster to build a new Jerusalem, though Catholic and Lutheran forces quickly reclaimed Münster and executed the Anabaptist leaders. Meanwhile, the printing press spread news of the Peace of Augsburg, which declared Lutheranism a legally permissible creed. Leaders of German states within the Holy Roman Empire also read Protestant works. Those who adopted Protestantism may have used the new religion as a cloak for political dissent, claiming sovereignty over papal and monarchical authority. The Thirty Years’ War, begun over religious differences, devastated, wrought devastating death tolls and involved not only the German states and the Holy Roman Empire, but also the countries of Sweden, Denmark, Bohemia, and France. Widespread communication which would have increased military advantage, was also brought about by the printing press. The Peace of Westphalia reestablished peace, declared Calvinism a legally permissible creed, and also ushered in an era of political wars fought over a balance of power. The printing press not only informed Europe of ongoing political and religious issues, but also served as a military and monarchical asset, as monarchs could issue decrees.

The printing press made the Protestant Reformation possible, and from it, the religious and political changes that ensued. While the Catholic Reformation could serve as a potential qualification, that as Catholics also spread their works through the printing press to counter Protestant ideas, it can be argued that, by then, the impact of the printing press’ spread of Protestant works was already so extensive
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Begin your response to each question at the top of a new page. Do not skip lines.

that no degree of papal control could quell the douse the spark that had already been lit. The impact of the printing press is almost incomparable to any other invention, except the Internet, which also revolutionized communication. To conclude, the impact of the printing press was profound, most importantly, in the Protestant Reformation.
As the Renaissance began to spread out from Italy, its ideas spread with it and became more commonplace. In the Northern Renaissance especially, increasing emphasis was placed on Christianity, Reform, and common people. Ultimately, this culminated with Martin Luther posting his 95 Theses in 1517. Around the same time Machiavelli was outlining how to rule effectively in *The Prince*. Although the printing press allowed for mass publication of a variety of books, the most significant effect of the printing press is the spread of Lutheranism and more broadly Protestantism.

Martin Luther’s ideas were met with heavy opposition from the Catholic Church. At the Diet of Worms, Luther is excommunicated from the church after failing to recant. The Catholic Church also bans Lutheranism in the Holy Roman Empire, keeping Catholicism as the only religion. If these events had happened in the 1100s or 1200s, that may have been the end of Lutheranism. But, because of the printing press, Luther’s ideas and messages were spread all across central Europe. Unfortunately, the conflict between Catholic and Protestant hung around until the late 1800s, but Luther’s ideas were necessary. Both to halt the corruption of
the Catholic church, and to offer another religion for people to follow. Lutheranism would be how books were printed, increasing both literacy and access to written ideas.

The printing press was not solely used for religious texts, however. Many pamphlets and how-to books were also published, in addition to the platform of philosophical works. Ultimately, they did not have as profound an effect on society.

While the printing press was beneficial for the overall spread of information, many of these pamphlets and ideas ultimately faded out of daily life. Lutheranism has stuck around to this day, which is the reason why the printing press had significant effect was the spread of Lutheranism.
The most significant effect of the printing press was by far the ability to copy books, scrolls, letters, etc., and any other source they wanted, quickly and efficiently. Before the printing press, books and literature were for the rich because there was not a fast way to copy them besides hand writing them over and over. After the invention of the printing press, many copies of books, letters, and articles could be made quickly, allowing for many copies. Different books to be available for everyone since the prices of books went down now that there were more copies available. This effected society around the world greatly by allowing different versions of books like the Bible to be made and it effected the economy of almost every country greatly. Books became popular around the world and became a common household item. The printing press also increased peoples reading skills greatly, allowing for everyday people to become more sophisticated. Overall the
Printing press is arguably one of the most effective inventions in history, and changed the world.
Question 2 — Long Essay Question

Note: Student samples are quoted verbatim and may contain grammatical errors.

Overview

The Long Essay Question (LEQ) asked students to formulate a thesis/claim in response to a prompt about a particular historical development or episode in European history. In 2021, each LEQ asked students to determine the most significant effect of historical events or processes in European history. LEQs require students to formulate arguments, utilize evidence, address historical context, and display an ability to employ historical reasoning skills.

In the case of LEQ 2, the question asked students to evaluate the most significant effect of the printing press in Europe between 1450 and 1650 (Key Concept 1.4). Responses were expected to relate the topic of the prompt to the broader historical events, developments or processes that occurred before, during, or continued after the time frame specified in the prompt. Responses were expected to provide specific examples of evidence relevant to the topic of the effects of the printing press in the period 1450–1650 and to use this specific historical evidence to support an argument in response to the prompt. Responses were expected to demonstrate the use of historical reasoning to frame or to structure an argument that addresses the prompt and, although the prompt directed students toward the historical reasoning process of causation, responses could also frame their arguments around other types of historical reasoning (comparison, continuity, and change over time).

Responses were expected to demonstrate a complex understanding of the effects of the printing press during the period 1450–1650. This demonstration of understanding could be achieved in various ways: for instance, by explaining that the spread of Protestant ideas during the Reformation was the most significant immediate effect of the printing press, while the rise of literacy had greater long-term effects or by evaluating the spread of subversive ideas. Also, the Protestant Reformation and new scientific concepts, such as heliocentrism, operated in tandem to disrupt the power of the Catholic Church. Responses were assessed on the extent to which they performed in the following four categories: thesis and/or claim, contextualization, evidence, and analysis and reasoning.

Sample: 2A
Score: 6

Thesis/Claim: 1
Contextualization: 1
Evidence: 2
Analysis and Reasoning: 2

A. Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for thesis/claim because in the first paragraph it identifies the spread of Protestant ideas as the most significant effect of the printing press.

B. Contextualization (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for contextualization because in the introduction it discusses the fact that prior to the invention of the printing press, manuscript texts were only available to elites and the Catholic Church.
Question 2 — Long Essay Question (continued)

C. Evidence (0–2 points): 2

Providing Specific Examples of Evidence
The response earned 1 point for providing specific examples of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt because it discusses multiple pieces of evidence including the spread of the writings of Martin Luther, the use of printing in political and military communications, and the Catholic Church’s banning of books.

Using Specific Evidence in Support of a Relevant Argument
The response earned 1 point for using specific evidence in support of an argument because it uses evidence to support an argument about how the printing press led to the Protestant Reformation and the devastation of the religious wars, as well as showing how the banning of books by the Catholic Church served as evidence for the power of the written word.

D. Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 2

Using Historical Reasoning
The response earned 1 point for using historical reasoning to frame or structure an argument because it systematically demonstrates how the Protestant Reformation was a consequence of the invention of the printing press.

Demonstrating Complex Understanding
The response earned 1 point for demonstrating a complex understanding because it provides a nuanced understanding of different ways that print affected the intertwined religious, political, and military history of the period.

Sample: 2B
Score: 4

Thesis/Claim: 1
Contextualization: 1
Evidence: 1
Analysis and Reasoning: 1

A. Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for thesis/claim because in the first paragraph it identifies the spread of Protestantism as the most significant effect of the printing press.

B. Contextualization (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for contextualization because of the discussion of the Renaissance at the outset of the essay. The discussion of the Protestant Reformation throughout also serves as context.

C. Evidence (0–2 points): 1

Providing Specific Examples of Evidence
The response earned 1 point for providing specific examples of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt.
Question 2 — Long Essay Question (continued)

because the response discusses two pieces of relevant evidence—the spread of Luther’s ideas through printing and the spread of nonreligious pamphlets.

Using Specific Evidence in Support of a Relevant Argument
The response did not earn the point for using specific evidence in support of an argument because it only connects the evidence related to the spread of Luther’s ideas through printing to an argument about the effects of the printing press.

D. Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 1

Using Historical Reasoning
The response earned 1 point for using historical reasoning to frame or structure an argument because it demonstrates how the Protestant Reformation was a consequence of the invention of the printing press.

Demonstrating Complex Understanding
The response did not earn the point for demonstrating a complex understanding because it does not use evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify its argument.

Sample: 2C
Score: 1

Thesis/Claim: 0
Contextualization: 1
Evidence: 0
Analysis and Reasoning: 0

A. Thesis/Claim (0–1 points): 0

The response did not earn the point for thesis/claim because it does not make a historically specific claim that establishes a line of reasoning about the most significant effect of the printing press.

B. Contextualization (0–1 points): 1

The response earned 1 point for contextualization because it discusses the fact that prior to the invention of the printing press, books were only for the rich because they were so difficult to copy.

C. Evidence (0–2 points): 0

Providing Specific Examples of Evidence
The response did not earn the point for providing specific examples of evidence relevant to the topic of the prompt because it only provides one piece of specific evidence, the reduction of the price of books with the introduction of the printing press. The mention of many different versions of the Bible is not specific enough to have earned the point because it does not note that the Bible was becoming available in vernacular languages.

Using Specific Evidence in Support of a Relevant Argument
The response did not earn the point for using specific evidence in support of an argument because it does not offer sufficient evidence in support of an argument about the impact of the printing press.
Question 2 — Long Essay Question (continued)

D. Analysis and Reasoning (0–2 points): 0

**Using Historical Reasoning**
The response did not earn the point for using historical reasoning to frame or structure an argument because it does not use historical reasoning such as comparison, causation, or continuity and change to frame or structure an argument in response to the prompt.

**Demonstrating Complex Understanding**
The response did not earn the point for demonstrating a complex understanding because it does not use evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify its argument.